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# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP

## INTELLIGENCE REPORT

COUNTRY Syria

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SUBJECT Communist Activities

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SUPPLEMENT

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1. Communist Cultural Programa. Organization

For the past six months the main source of communist cultural activity in Syria has been the Association for the Exchange of Culture Between Soviet Russia and Syria (Jama'iyatu 'l Ta'awuni Baina Rusiyati 's Sufiyatiyati wa Suriyah). It was founded essentially as a Russian counterpart of the "British Council" plan.

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Comments:

- (1) The British Council was established in Palestine largely on the assumption that British civilization can supply the soundest standards of education and social progress. The Council therefore aims at promoting knowledge of all aspects of Britain's culture by means of adult education in the main centers of large cities and through cultural and social clubs in smaller towns.
- (2) Previous reports from other sources on the subject of Russian cultural societies have mentioned the existence of the Society of Cultural Cooperation in Syria, headed by Dr. Kamil 'Ayyad, and the Société Syro-Russe pour l'Aide Culturelle. In all probability these are variations produced in translating and are the same organization as the Association discussed in this report.

b. Officers

The Association's directing group is reported to be completely interlocked with that of the Communist Party, and it is in close touch with the Russian Legation and with the local Tass representative. The main officers of the organization are:

- (1) President: Dr. Kamil 'Ayyad, professor in the Damascus normal school and a leading communist intellectual. Source reports him to be a caustic man of remarkable intelligence having many powerful friends in the Government, notably Ahmad Sharabati, Defense Minister.

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- (2) Vice-President: Dr. Jamil Saliba, important employee of the Syrian Ministry of Education, Director of the Damascus normal school. It was previously reported that he receives propaganda from the Soviet Legation which he distributes among friends, teachers, and students.
- (3) Secretary: Fawzi Shalq, engineer, formerly purchasing agent for the municipality of Damascus. Also Secretary of the Communist Party in Damascus.

c. Program

- (1) The Association is reported to have an expensive, well-furnished center on Shari Ruadah, a street in the new, upper middle class residential district of Arnus which is a suburb of Damascus. The center provides space and equipment for a program of lectures, teas, exhibitions and motion pictures (the last, provided by the Soviet Legation.) The lectures, given by such prominent local communists as Qadri Qal'aji, Michel Baddurah, Rashid 'Isa, and Najjat Kassat Hasan, cover a variety of topics on a single theme, including Communist Heroes, Heroic Exploits of the Red Army, Communist Progress and Achievements, etc. Educational enterprises sponsored by the United States in the Levant are regularly baited at these lectures as being imperialistic and fascist.
- (2) The Syrian delegates on the recently returned Cultural Mission to the U.S.S.R. were all members of the Association. Source confirms previous reports that while their public reactions to the trip were enthusiastic, privately they indicated dismay at the conditions in Russia and were offended at being treated as equals with the backward people of the Uzbek Republic.

2. Communist Indoctrination of Teachers

- a. In population centers where there is no branch of the Communist Party, the Party's executive has been using teachers placed in government or private schools to spread communist ideology. The teachers are selected for indoctrination in the normal schools of Damascus and Homs by Dr. Jamil Saliba, Dr. Kamil 'Ayyad, and Faqir 'Aqil, a young AUB-trained professor at Homs normal school. When sent out, the teachers are supplied with subscriptions to Sawt al-Sha'b, the Communist newspaper, and other related literature. They work first among other teachers and civil servants and try to make contacts among local intelligentsia.
- b. This method of operating has been confirmed by sources who supply the following specific details:

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- (1) Lattakia: Although there has been no overtly organized or active communist movement to date, five or six communist school teachers are believed to be enlisting sympathizers. It is estimated that about fifty people might be persuaded to join the Party.
- (2) Banyas: A communist teacher from the normal school at Homs has reportedly grouped most of the younger professors in the Lycée around him. Parents are alarmed by pupils' reports.
- (3) Palmyra (Tadmor): A young, Homs-trained, teacher encourages people to read Sawt al-Sha'b. Substantial citizens, however, are said to scoff at his efforts to preach communism.
- (4) Deir ez-Zor: Two professors from the Damascus normal school and one from Homs are evidently widely influential among teachers and civil servants. They have formed a communist group which is in touch with the Party branch in Qamishli.

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